



25th Navajo Nation Council

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Arizona Secretary of State addresses the Navajo Nation and pledges to work for fair elections for tribal nations



PHOTO: Arizona Secretary of State Adrian Fontes reinforced his dedication to working with tribal nations and organizations.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.- On the opening day of 2023 Fall Council session, Arizona Secretary of State Adrian Fontes provided a report focusing on his role as the state of Arizona's Chief Election Officer in providing oversight guidance for safe, accurate elections.

As Chief Election Officer, Secretary Fontes said he facilitates discussions and consultation with tribal nations, the counties, and the federal government to protect tribal voters. The Arizona Secretary of State's Office publishes an election procedure manual to ensure consistent and efficient election administration across the state.

"Madame Speaker has put forth recommendations to the manual and the state adopted them," Fontes said. "The changes were made and forwarded to [Arizona] Governor Katie Hobbs."

The Secretary's Office has implemented an Online Voter Registration Unique URL Program to encourage organizations conducting large-scale voter registration drives to do so electronically and securely through the ServiceArizona website, rather than relying exclusively on paper forms.

Fontes said that groups and organizations can use this program to register voters using computers and tablets, which will speed up voter registration. Additionally, he is advocating to increase voting centers in the state.

“In Phoenix, there is a remote voter registration terminal at Native Health, so tribal members can go to an organization they trust to register to vote,” he said. “I advocate for vote centers to be placed and expanded across Arizona. We need help geocoding for rural voters because we need every ballot to be correct and tabulated.”

Fontes said his office is addressing communication challenges, while also working with the counties to enforce chapter and precinct boundaries for accuracy, and to make them aware of the challenges that face Native voters.

His update included the implementation of a workforce fellowship program, in which the State Secretary’s Office provides funding to counties to recruit students from community colleges and universities to help county election departments assist with elections by providing on the ground staffing.

Fontes noted that programs like this will help elections run smoothly and avoid situations like what happened in Many Farms.

“What happened in Many Farms last year was dead wrong and shouldn’t have happened,” he said. “The polling place shouldn’t have opened late.”

In his closing statement, Fontes reinforced his dedication to working with tribal nations and organizations.

“It’s an honor to be before this Council today,” he said. “It’s my duty to ensure that every American has their constitutional rights preserved and that voting is protected.”

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